

A Year After the Armistice—The Unsettled Disputes

The Peace Hoped for a Year Ago Is Still To Be Attained—Many Wars Still Going On

By Frank H. Simonds

WITH the current week we pass the first anniversary of the armistice, and this milestone will naturally excite many comments. Beyond all else it is inevitable that the public of all the nations, which one year ago welcomed the cessation of hostilities, with the concomitant surrender of Germany, as not merely an end of immediate horror, but the beginning of a period of peace and prosperity, will confess alike to disappointment and to disillusionment. At the end of a year of so-called peace, war is still going forward in many portions of Europe, new disputes have arisen in place of the old issues of a year ago, and, technically at least, the condition of peace between Germany and the United States has not been restored.

Quick Settlement Was Expected

In that hour it was the belief in America, if not in Europe, that the military decision in the case of Germany, which had preceded the actual armistice, would supply the opportunity for a settlement, not a mere settlement of the single issue raised by the German attack in August, 1914, but of the innumerable issues stirred up in the course of the war. The phrase "making the world safe for democracy" had been accepted with something of a literal interpretation, and the people of the United States looked forward to a peace conference as calculated not alone to restore immediate peace, but to eliminate causes of war and dispose of those issues out of which conflicts had risen or threatened during the troubled generation preceding.

Exactly what the European emotion was at the same moment it is exceedingly difficult to say. The exhaustion of the war had reached a point hardly equaled before in history, not individuals, not classes of society, but whole nations had been so racked with the strain of more than four years of conflict. Enthusiasm and even expectation, such as there were in the United States, were certainly not to be found in Europe, but, by contrast, there was a certain emotional outburst.

Old Customs Were Changed

Looking backward over the course of the last year much that was obscure in November, 1918, becomes clear. In the first place, we are all now painfully aware that the war so thoroughly uprooted institutions, habits, systems that the chance of a return to before-the-war conditions is impossible, not alone politically but economically.

On the political side two of the great empires of modern history, the Hapsburg and the Romanoff, had been destroyed, blown into fragments, and between the fragments there had developed hostilities, ancient and new, which continued and seemingly will long continue to plague and to puzzle. A third and even more powerful empire, that of the Hohenzollerns, had crashed down, after military defeat, and for the moment seemed likely to dissolve into another Russian chaos.

The task of those upon whom the duty developed to make peace was, therefore, a thing entirely different from the problem which might have been posed had Germany been defeated in 1914, or even in 1916, while the Russian and the Austro-Hungarian empires still stood and the German Empire itself had not undergone the disintegrating strain of four years of conflict.

The decisions of the Conference of Paris have been universally assailed, attacked alike by the representatives of progress and of reaction, by the liberals and the conservatives, but they have been even more bitterly assailed by masses of men and women who, without profound convictions, looked to Paris for a real settlement and find themselves now confronted in each day's news by the inescapable fact that more problems remain unsettled than were recognized as existing a year ago. The gravest indictment of public

men of all nations that one encounters to-day is based upon the fact that they have failed to achieve any complete or approximate settlement, that the great questions which were set before them a year ago remain unanswered to-day.

Domestic Unrest Grows

Out of this situation has grown domestic unrest in every nation which fought. If the Germans assailed their own leaders for having consented to fatal terms in the Peace of Versailles, the French, the British and the Italian people, and, for that matter, the American people, assailed their representatives for failure to dispose of the issues raised by the war in such fashion that peace or even approximate peace would be assured.

To-day in America we are engaged in a bitter political debate over a single detail in the peace settlement; our whole legislative and even our executive departments have been engaged for nearly six months in a debate which has not yet terminated and must terminate before there can be peace in the world. In France the debate, if now ended, has been not less acute, while the British Ministry which brought back the most profitable peace terms in British history found itself in a minority only the other day and narrowly escaped resignation.

Meantime, while domestic unrest, political and even more economic, has postponed a return to peace in the four great nations that in alliance defeated Germany, a multitude of rivalries has broken out between newly liberated peoples, between the recent allies and between the great powers and smaller races. Back of this lies the ever menacing shadow of Russia, where, if results are the measure, western statesmanship has failed most conspicuously and completely. Not many months ago it was estimated in the British House of Commons that there were twenty wars actually in progress and the number has hardly decreased since that time.

Russia Still Is Battleground

Each newspaper brings fresh reports of the fighting on at least three fronts in Russia. Italian and Jugo-Slav troops face each other in an armed truce on the Adriatic about Fiume and Serb and Rumanian troops are mobilized against each other in the Banat, while Rumanian soldiers, in defiance of Allied mandate, continue to occupy Hungarian cities and provinces. Never was the situation in Asia Minor more critical than to-day, while the western nations remain deadlocked over the ultimate disposition of the last remaining fragment of Turkey in Europe, the Thracian hinterland of Constantinople.

In all this chaos and confusion it is plain that certain facts have been established. Rightly or wrongly, it is plain that the people of France, Great Britain and the United States will not consent to fight a new war to restore order in Russia; they will not supply the troops to expel the Italians from Fiume or the Rumanians from Budapest; they hesitate even to furnish the troops necessary if there is to be a fair election in portions of Germany to determine whether the inhabitants shall remain German or pass to Poland, to Denmark, or to Belgium.

More than this, the course of the United States has almost amounted to a repudiation of the essential principle enunciated by President Wilson in Europe, that America was henceforth to emerge from her isolation and in association with the other liberal powers establish a league of nations and contribute to the clothing of its decisions with adequate authority. The ratification of the Treaty of Versailles in Washington without amendment seems certain, but the reservations, whose adoption seems equally certain, deprive the treaty of most of its moral force by divesting it of all guarantees of an American character.

Few Issues Really Settled

In sum, then, the year which has followed the signing of the armistice has served to demonstrate that the war itself settled few other issues than the one great question, that of German domination. The immediate menace of German world supremacy has been temporarily abolished, but unfortunately there are still lacking even the most tenuous evidences that German defeat has been followed by any change in German purpose. What the German means to do when he gets on his feet again, what spirit he will display, whether he will turn

Where the Fighting Still Goes On



The first anniversary of the armistice sees fighting still going on in at least a dozen places in Europe and the Near East. The above map shows these twelve storm centers as follows:

1. In the Baltic region there is a four-cornered struggle between the Lett and Esth nationalist troops, the German-Russian monarchist force of Colonel Bermond, and the Bolsheviks.
2. South of Petrograd the alleged anti-German forces of General Yudenitch are in contact with the "red" armies.
3. On the North Russian front the troops of the anti-Bolshevik Archangel government are still "sticking it out" in spite of the withdrawal of the British expeditionary force.
4. In Eastern Russia Kolchak's army is suffering one defeat after another at the hands of the "reds."
5. In Southern Russia there is the volunteer army of General Demikhin making war on the "reds" and the Ukrainians.
6. In Volhynia and Podolia the troops of the Ukrainian directorate, under General Petlura, are facing the Bolsheviks on one side, the Poles on the other.
7. Along the Dvina the Polish-Bolshevik war continues.
8. In Silesia there is no actual fighting, but something very much like a truce between the Poles and Germans.
9. Hungary, what with the Rumanian occupation and the White Terror, with its pogroms and wholesale executions, is very much in the state of war.
10. On the Adriatic fighting may start any moment between the Italians and Jugo-Slavs, with d'Annunzio's volunteers still holding "conquered" Fiume.
11. In Albania promiscuous fighting is going on, with Italians, French, Greeks, Serbians and Albanians participating.
12. In Asia Minor the Turkish nationalist forces of Mustappa Kemal Pasha are defying the Allies.

from his old gods or continue to worship them with new zeal, is a matter of prophecy only.

And this uncertainty has paralyzed settlement, real settlement. It explains French demands for guarantees against a new attack; it explains the new struggles for alliances and combinations in Europe. It explains why decisions of the Conference of Paris, just decisions, have not been applied. If Germany is to attack again, then the safety of France will depend upon the course of Italy—and if France quarrels with Italy, if France joins

with Britain and the United States in forcing Italy out of Fiume, nothing is more inevitable than that Italy will stand with Germany in the next conflict, with fatal consequences to France.

That peace which was to be a "healing peace," a righteous settlement, a guarantee against future war, was made wellnigh impossible by the absence of any clear proof of German purpose, nor was there any human method of fathoming German purpose. Peace had to be constructed on the basis of an insurance against a repetition of the

past, but that insurance precluded precisely the element of "healing" which was required to arrive at the results sought by President Wilson. And if it were impossible to determine as to Germany, what process of divination could or can disclose the future of Russia? Despite temporary progress by armies believed by the western publics to represent the hope of restoring sanity and order in the Slav state, it still remains patent that such a restoration is a thing of the distant future, and again and again there is presented the possibility that

there may be a combination between Slav and Teuton, or an ultimate aggrandizement of the Teuton, which will carry instant and deadly peril to every country.

Blame Laid to Wilson

It is fashionable nowadays to blame one statesman or all statesmen for this condition of world chaos and anarchy which exists. In the United States, with ever-increasing vehemence, President Wilson is denounced as responsible in some way for the European anarchy. Yet it seems to me that the se-

New Issues Have Arisen in Place of the Old and the Condition of America Is Unsettled

verest indictment that can be justly framed will only charge that he went to Europe advocating a method of settlement which was momentarily accepted by nations and peoples having no method to offer themselves and, either through faith or policy, or both, subscribing to the President's formula.

It may be that a league of nations was always impossible; was totally impossible in the circumstances existing after the German defeat, but there has never been any alternative offered, and those who most bitterly perceive the limitations of the President's scheme still profess to see in it the single present hope of escape from the vicious circle of conflict-breeding wars and settlements.

In a sense, all of the larger problems which were presented at Paris have proven themselves insoluble through centuries of European history. The Congress of Vienna nearly broke up as a consequence of disputes over Poland. In the same assembly the Saar Basin, now the object of world discussion, was, in larger part, assigned to France once and withdrawn on second thought, after Napoleon had come and gone. The Balkan rivalries were bitterer 500 years ago—before the Turk came and temporarily abolished them—than at this moment, while even the Romans were unable to manage the Illyrian difficulties, which are the Adriatic disputes of the present hour.

A year ago the hope that war-making disputes from the Scheldt to the Beresina could be solved at the Peace Conference was general, but neither the hope nor the disappointment which has followed its disappearance seems to me to have been justified. Similarly, the hope that an exhausted world could immediately perform the gigantic tasks necessary to reestablishing order, politically or economically, will undoubtedly appear to the future to have been a mirage rather than a well founded conception.

Ebb Point Is Passed

By contrast, it seems to me that a year after the armistice we have perhaps touched, and even passed, the lowest point in the inevitable pessimism. The real results of the war may henceforth become clearer and clearer until it becomes undeniable that if the defeat of Germany did not, as some men and women momentarily hoped, open the short way to establishing heaven on earth, it no less contributed to making the earth more tolerable for human beings.

The defeat of the German must unquestionably seem to the future as great a deliverance as the defeat of Spain, when that nation sought to fasten its equally fatal system, political and otherwise, upon Europe. The independence of the several tribes and races of Europe and of the world was reestablished and to the free peoples millions were added.

The world went to war to save itself from German tyranny and German domination. In this it was successful, although the struggle was long and the issue in doubt until the end. Germany beaten, the world for a moment dreamed that the victory could be stretched to cover insurance against all future perils, a guarantee of peace, a protection against future war. So far as one can now see, this later and supplementary purpose has not been measurably achieved. Disappointment at this has brought with it forgetfulness of the actual victory in the main struggle.

A year after the armistice it is plain that many questions out of which wars may arise will survive the settlement of Paris; it is even possible that certain circumstances in the settlement itself may provide the occasion of later wars. The German defeat carried with it no automatic adjustment of the rivalry of the Slav and the Latin on the east shore of the Adriatic; it did not affect in the smallest degree the civil strife or political and economic suicide of Russia. There are still millions of men and women in Europe who would rather engage in a new war than accept that alien nationality which the Paris Conference established for them.

Former Allies Growling

Nor is it less true that the British and French who vied in loyal and generous rivalry in stopping German attacks in Picardy twenty

months ago are to-day quarrelling over the frontiers of Syria, while the same Italians who cheered Mr. Wilson in Rome as a savior of the world, not a year ago, are to-day denouncing him with a frenzy at least as mad. The European policy, who had to rescue Americans from embraces which threatened strangulation on Armistice Day, at least in certain corners of Europe, are now equally busy guarding Americans from assassination. Defeating the Germans has not visibly modified human nature, abolished jealousies, angers, dislikes in men or nations. Even worse, all the splendor of national unity and mutual sacrifice for a common cause has not made Frenchmen permanently lay aside domestic feuds or Americans forget old political animosities.

Wherefore it is plain that the coming of the first anniversary of the armistice will be a signal for much bitterness and not a little re-creation. But by contrast, it seems to me that each succeeding anniversary may well bring, with a broader perspective, a better appreciation of the actual achievements of the war. Much that the contemporary world momentarily expected will be dismissed as a natural consequence of the strain of the years, then recent; for the rest, I believe each decade will demonstrate more clearly how great was the danger from which we all escaped when at last Germany surrendered on November 11, 1918.

The real measure of the victory is to be found not in reading the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, but those of the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest, documents which were to have served as models for that subsequent Peace of Paris to be written by the good German sword. The world to-day tends to forget what the German was going to do and to confine its attention to what the conquerors of Germany have not done.

All Wanted Too Much

I remember riding last spring in the Woëvre plain, where village after village had been destroyed, and picking up along the way an old French peasant woman, going back to examine for the first time the home from which she had fled four years before when German hordes first entered France. She did not know whether there was a single stone left or not and she had every reason to believe that all had been swept away, judging by what she saw all about her.

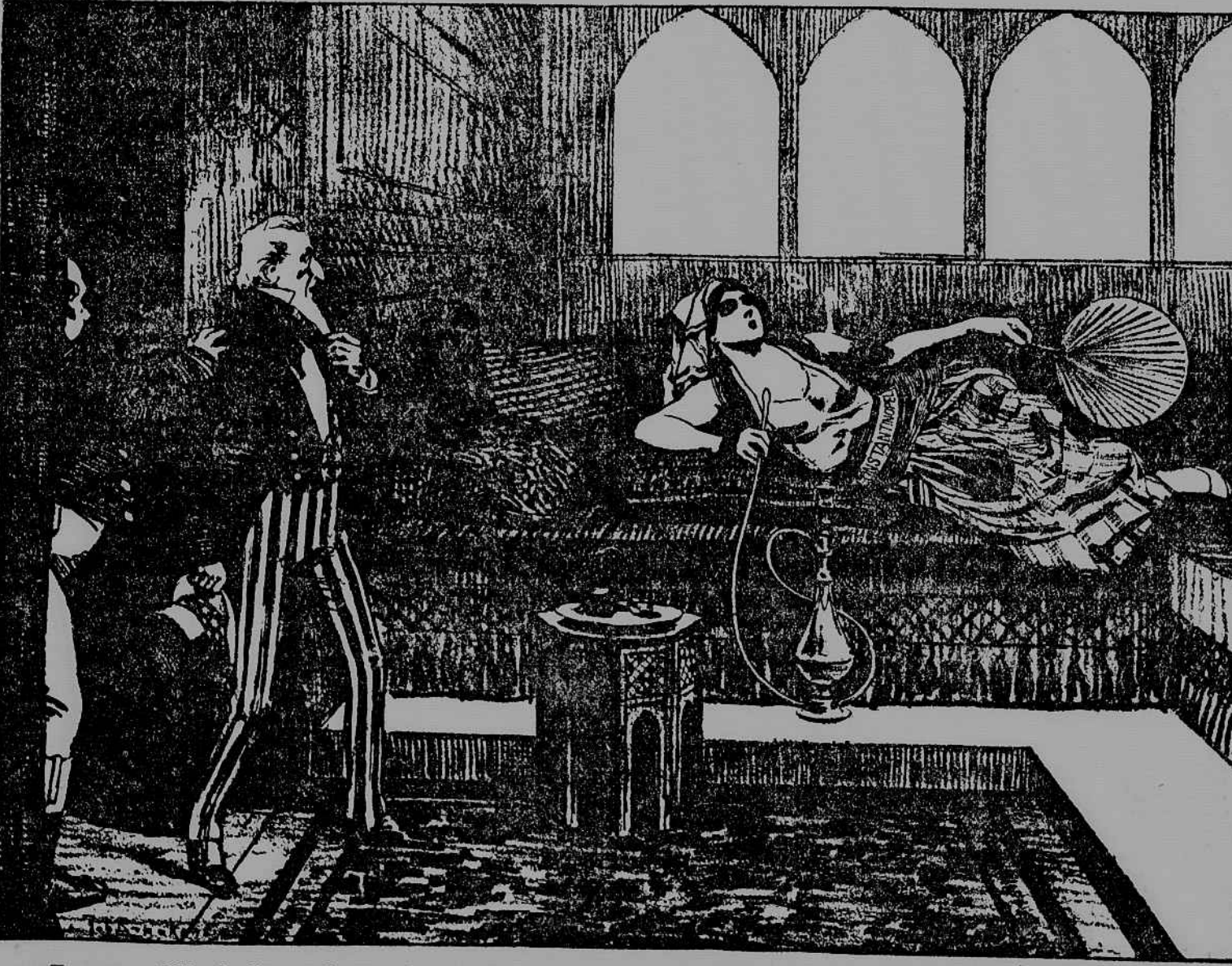
In due time we came to her hamlet, we rounded the corner and saw the walls of her home. They stood, they seemed intact. She leaped from the car and rushed through the open door, while we followed at a distance. It was a solid stone house, the entrance seemed sound, the front rooms betrayed not a sign of destruction; from downright fear we changed rapidly to a sense of exultation understood by any one who has seen German destruction.

But in her final survey, in a stone shed adjoining the house, the woman found the Boche had driven a deep dugout straight down through the floor. There was the hole, a mass of broken cement, and, seeing it, in a single second every sense of satisfaction and gratitude vanished and the Frenchwoman denounced the invaders with a fury beyond my feeble French to follow or comprehend. Her house was safe, it stood amid the ruins of a wrecked town, but the cowshed was mutilated, not irreparably, but visibly, and her rage was beyond description. Afterward, in Paris, in the universal execration of the Peace Conference, I was more than once reminded of the woman of Etain.

It is easy now to forget the moments the world lived through before the Marne, in the first days of the Verdun attack, in the terrible week when Ludendorff drove forward from St. Quentin to Montdidier, but along with any disappointments which may come now in perceiving the limitations of the victory it seems to me there must be some thought for the greatness of the actual deliverance.

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Another Unsettled Problem—Especially for the U. S.



Entente: "Uncle Sam, please take the lady under your protection."—De Amsterdammer, Amsterdam.